



SENATOR
BILL HARDIMAN

E-Hardiman Herald



*Chair, Families & Human
Services Committee
Appropriations Committee:
Chair, Family Independence
Agency, Commerce Labor
& Economic Development,
Capitol Outlay,
Higher Education*

December 2004

HARDIMAN HAS BUSY LAST WEEK OF SESSION

Four bills sponsored by Senator Bill Hardiman, passed the Legislature last week and now are before the governor for consideration. Senator Hardiman sponsored SB 1150, which would foster more flexibility in the health-insurance options of employers; Senate Bill 756 (Public Act 433 of 2004), which deals with preventing lead poisoning; SB 963, which aims to strengthen marriages; and SB 1202, which would create tax-increment financing districts for historic areas.

Senate Bill 1150 will allow flexibility in the market place that will let some individuals and businesses that do not have any insurance to gain some level of coverage. Equally important, SB 1150 will allow some people or businesses which presently have coverage but are struggling with the costs to maintain some coverage.

P.A. 433 of 2004 is part of a larger lead-poisoning package. Specifically, Hardiman's bill will require laboratories that perform tests on lead levels in blood to report the findings to the Community Health Department. This legislation also seeks to prohibit landlords from knowingly renting or leasing with lead-paint hazards. The aim of the legislation is to provide for a safer environment for children, especially those in poorer neighborhoods, as they are the most at risk.

Hardiman also joined in the Legislature's marriage-protection package, which focuses on trying to preserve marriages by encouraging premarital education or counseling, allowing a retired clergy member to continue to legally offer marriage counseling, providing a marriage preservation tax credit, and promoting divorce-effects education programs.

The Senator's bill would require couples to tell clerks whether they have received the optional premarital-education program before getting a marriage license. If the program is taken by the couple, a marriage license can be issued the same day instead of the normal 3 day waiting period.

The Senator also joined a bipartisan group of lawmakers who introduced a legislative package designed to help communities revitalize, improve and create incentives for their central business and residential districts, initiate new growth and create job opportunities. Hardiman sponsored SB 1202 that would allow the creation of tax-increment financing district for historic areas. Such districts capture property taxes for the district authority to make improvements to the area.

SENATOR RECEIVES THREE AWARDS

Senator Hardiman recently received three prestigious awards for distinguished service in the Michigan Senate for his efforts to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families throughout Michigan.

On Monday, November 29, Hardiman received the 2004 “Much Ado” Award from Michigan’s Children, on Tuesday, December 7, he received special recognition from the Michigan Federation for Children and Families, and on Friday, December 10, he received an A+ Legislative Report Card on after-school programs from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Michigan.

Senator Hardiman has been a strong advocate for vulnerable children and families over the past two years in Lansing. As chair of both the Senate Families and Human Services Committee and the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Family Independence Agency, Hardiman has ushered several key pieces of legislation through the process on behalf of children.

SENATOR HARDIMAN ANNOUNCES DISTRICT OFFICE HOURS

Starting Monday, February 7, Senator Hardiman will be holding monthly district office hours throughout the 29th district. Office hours will be held on the first Monday of each month from 10:00am – 11:30am.

- Monday, February 7 office hours will be located at the Kentwood Library, 4700 Kalamazoo SE, Kentwood, MI 49508.

Senator Hardiman will hold this time each month so constituents of the 29th district have an opportunity to speak to him about any questions or concerns they may have regarding state issues. You can also contact Senator Hardiman via his toll-free number: 1-866-305-2129 or e-mail: senbhardiman@senate.michigan.gov to set-up a meeting outside of the district hours.

EFFORT TO REPLACE MEAP TEST GOES TO GOVERNOR

The Senate sent the governor legislation that would replace the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test for high-school students with a test based on a college-entrance exam. This bill would also tie the Michigan Merit Award Scholarship to the results of the new test. The proposed test, called the Michigan Merit Exam, would use a combination of a college-admissions test, a workplace skills exam and a social-studies component. The test would first be given to students starting in 2007. The effort is supported by a broad coalition of state leaders in secondary and post-secondary education. The college-admissions test to be used is not specified in the legislation. The change is needed because the MEAP turnaround time is too long for teachers to take advantage of results to improve student achievement. Also, colleges and universities also do not consider it when making admissions decisions. Senate Bills 1153-1157 now head to the governor for consideration.

STATE STILL BATTLING FISCAL WOES

According to a national study, other states and the nation as a whole, seem to be moving in the right direction with continued growth, while Michigan lags behind in economic recovery and job growth. Michigan is one of just three states that is facing a budget shortfall, according to that study, and is also one of just three states where tax revenues are falling below projections.

On Friday, December 3, a special revenue estimating conference of the House and Senate Fiscal Agencies and the state treasurer estimated that 2004-05 revenues will be a total of \$370 million below original forecasts. It is projected that the state's General Fund will come in approximately \$256.8 million short, while the School Aid fund will be short by approximately \$113.2 million.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Hardiman Herald is designed to provide residents and organizations with a timely update of Senator Bill Hardiman's activity in Lansing. If you have any questions, please contact Senator Hardiman's office.

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I wish you a safe and prosperous year. May God bless you and your family during this holiday season.